



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

MICHELLE MOWERY JOHNSON

(615) 313-4707 (OFFICE)

(615) 272-0845 (PAGER)

STATE OF TENNESSEE OFFERING CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE TO EVACUEES *PROGRAM TO ASSIST FAMILIES LOOKING FOR WORK*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Human Services is working quickly to address the immediate needs of the thousands of Hurricane Katrina families who have made their way to Tennessee. Child care is a critical part of helping these families put their lives back together.

Effective today, families who have evacuated to Tennessee in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina may receive child care assistance. This assistance will allow children to be placed in stable environments during a time of tremendous emotional and physical stress and allow parents to seek employment. Qualified applicants will only be eligible for up to nine weeks of assistance and will receive a voucher to be used at any state-licensed child care agency. Application for the program must be made in a Child Care Certificate Program office or through a face-to-face interview.

“This is another way that Tennessee is moving forward to help those fragile families who have sought refuge in communities across the state,” said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. “An important feature of this program is the portability of the voucher. As it is likely that these families’ living and/or working arrangements may change on short notice, the program enables the family to take the voucher with them and use at any licensed agency in the state.”

Child care providers will be paid a daily rate and will be reimbursed after returning the voucher to DHS. Rates range depending on the age of the child in care—from \$25/day for infant care to \$12/day for school-age children.

Hurricane Katrina evacuees who have access to on-site child care at a shelter will not be eligible for this assistance.

Families participating in the child care assistance program are also still eligible for the Families First EASE program. After one week, more than 1,500 families have received a total of \$1.7 million in benefits through this program.

The expedited Food Stamp program continues to operate in all DHS county offices across the state. Almost 3,800 eligible individuals and families have signed up for the program and received the initial \$100 Food Stamp benefit card. Food Stamp benefits are 100% federally funded.

DHS expects that the federal government will reimburse Tennessee for these associated disaster relief costs.

The State of Tennessee is carefully coordinating its response to the fallout from hurricane Katrina. Governor Bredesen has asked all departments and agencies in state government to work closely together to provide help and services to evacuees who are coming to Tennessee. Regular briefings on Tennessee’s response to hurricane Katrina are available through the Governor’s office at 615-741-3763.

For information on the nearest child care assistance office, call 1-800-462-8261.

To locate a licensed child care facility, contact the local child care resource and referral center:

<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/ccr&r-numbers.pdf>

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CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700